The Seed Sower

A Magazine of Liberal Christianity

For the Church, the School and the Home.

EDITED BY JOSEPH WOOD AND JAMES CROSSLEY.

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Advertisements.

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BIRMINGHAM:
OWEN HOPKINS, COLMORE ROW.

To our Readers.

For some time past there has been a growing sense of unity and fellowship among the Churches of the Liberal Faith in the midland district, and this conviction of a common life, work and interest has led to the desire for some medium of communication between their members, besides the spring and autumnal meetings of the Midland Christian Union. It is one of the objects of the *Seed Sower* to provide for this felt want. It will endeavour to make the Churches of the district better acquainted with each other, and to provide a means of informing them of their neighbours welfare.

The *Seed Sower* will also give expression to the broader, sweeter faith for which men are looking and longing, and will be so conducted that it can be put into the hands of strangers, and given away freely in district visiting as an exponent of the Ethical, Social, and Religious objects of the movement to which we are committed.

The *Seed Sower* will remember that there are many furrows in which the good seed may be dropped. It will think of children, as well as adults, of Home as well as the Church, of the school as well as the study. It will be a Magazine, not for a select few, but for "all sorts and conditions of men, popular in style, not too bright and good for human nature's daily food." It will notice the work and thought of the Independent Liberal Churches of the country, whatever name they adopt. Under the heading of "News from the Field" it will report the activities of our own Churches. Under the heading of "The Study Table" it will notice books worth reading, and it will provide something for the Sunday School Teacher on every Sunday in the month.

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Local Church Calendar for March.

BIRMINGHAM : Church of the Messiah.
Ministers : Revs. Dr. Crosskey and James Crossley. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special :

BIRMINGHAM : The Hurst Street Mission.
Minister : Rev. W. J. Clarke. Services :
Special :

BIRMINGHAM : The Fazeley Street Mission.
Minister : Rev. T. Pike. Services :
Special :

BIRMINGHAM : The Newhall Hill Church.
Minister : Rev. J. Charlesworth. Services :
Special. :

BIRMINGHAM : The Old Meeting Church.
Minister : Rev. Joseph Wood. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special :

BIRMINGHAM : The Church of the Saviour.
Minister : The Rev. J. C. Street. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special :

BANBURY :
Minister : Services :
Special :

COSELEY :
Minister : Rev. Henry Eachus. Services :
Special :

CRADLEY :
Minister : Rev. E. O'Connor. Services :
Special :

DUDLEY :
Minister : Services :
Special :

EVESHAM :
Minister : Services :
Special :

KIDDERMINSTER :
Minister : Services :
Special :

KINGSWOOD :
Minister : Services :
Special :

OLDBURY :
Minister : Services :
Special :

SHREWSBURY :
Minister : Services :
Special :

STOURBRIDGE :
Minister : Services :
Special :

TAMWORTH :
Minister : Rev. J. Howard. Services :
Special :

THE LYE :
Minister : Rev. J. Wrigley, B.A. Services :
Special :

WALSALL :
Minister : Rev. Peter Dean. Services :
Special :

WEST BROMWICH :
Minister : Rev. John Harrison. Services :
Special :

WHITCHURCH :
Minister : Rev. George Eyre Evans. Services :
Special :

WOLVERHAMPTON :
Minister : Rev. L. G. Harris Crook. Services :
Special :

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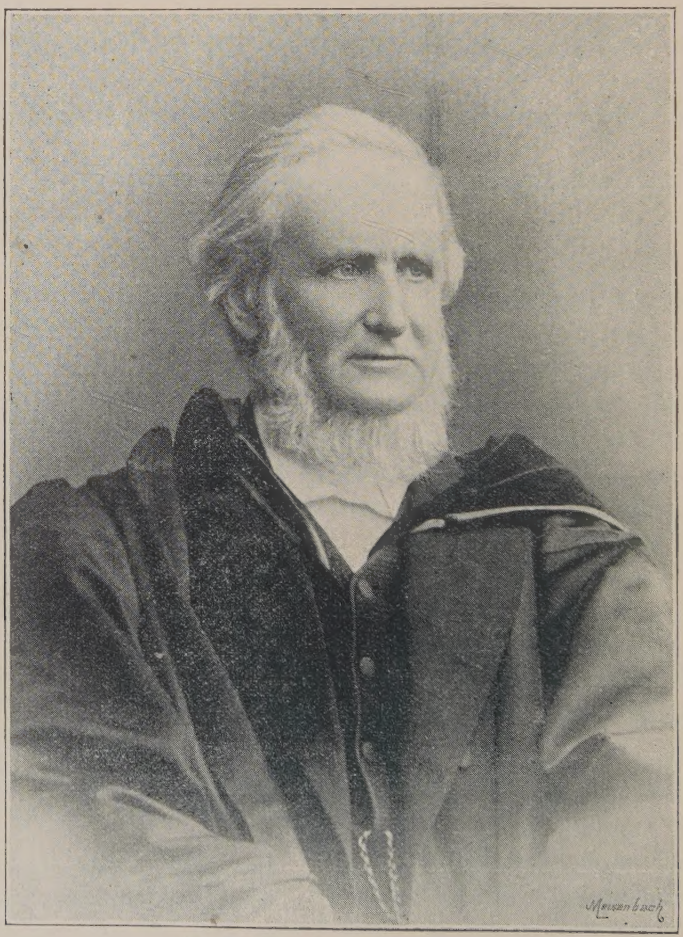
Dr. Crosskey

[AN INTERVIEW].

Dr. Crosskey's study is a pleasant room, overlooking one of the large old-fashioned gardens of Edgbaston. It bears all the signs of a busy man's workshop. The walls, lined from floor to ceiling with books; the geological cabinets, the heavily-laden library table, with its burden of pamphlets, blue books, scientific journals and correspondence, tell us—if we did not know before—that we are in the sanctum of a divine, a man of science, and an educationalist. The owner of this pleasant room is,



THE REV. W. H. CROSSKEY, LL.D.

however, its chief point of attraction. The refined, clear-cut face, with its halo of white hair, never looked more interesting than it does now under the burden of years and after the experience of pain and sickness. The lines have deepened, trouble has left its traces behind, but the impression of spiritual beauty comes home to one more vividly than in the days of perfect health. It is a face which has in it "The lineaments of gospel books." And although the spare figure is perhaps a little less up to weight than usual, there is the same

intensity of purpose, the same hopefulness in the tones of the voice, the same brightness of eye, the same earnestness about the great work of life, that has won for Dr. Crosskey so deservedly high a place in the esteem and affection, not only of his congregation and townsmen, but of a much wider public.

After a hearty grip of the hand and an assurance that strength was coming back daily, the question was asked, "Doctor, you have been a prominent minister among the Unitarians for now 45 years What have been the changes in Unitarian thought and theology during that time?"

"That is a big question, and only the salient points can be touched. I began my ministry at Derby, in '48 on a stipend of £80 a year. After four years labour, I was invited to Glasgow, where I remained 17 years. In '69 I removed to Birmingham—just in the thick of the great education fight. Comparing the past with the present, I notice several differences. Our men care less about doctrinal bristles than of old. Half-a-century ago Theology was pressed into prominence by our struggle for existence. Now Religion has the emphasis. We are not challenged and denounced as of old—consequently we are not so often on the Theological war path, and the stress of our ministry is upon more important things."

"What about Biblical criticism?"

"Our attitude towards the Bible is much freer and much more rational. In my early days Unitarian divines appealed to the Bible in exactly the same way as their orthodox opponents. It was their final authority. They tried to prove Unitarianism by scripture texts, and a strange hash they sometimes made, as when one of our ministers preaching on the text, 'Before Abraham was, I Am,' made it read, 'Before Abraham was, I was predicted to be the Messiah.' Only it must be remembered that Biblical criticism had not then touched English thought at all. We were the first to give it a welcome, and our ministers to-day regard the Bible as one, and one only, of the many voices by which God has spoken to men."

"And what of miracles?"

"There again I note a great advance. When I began my ministry the acceptance of the New Testament miracles was almost everywhere a condition of entrance to the Unitarian pulpit. The Old Testament miracles might be doubted: the miracle of the Incarnation might be explained away, but all the rest were sacred. The view was that the miracles of Christ authenticated his divine mission. One of my predecessors in Scotland was driven from his pulpit by denying miracles. An attempt was made to apply the test to me, in connection with two or three English churches which were making overtures for my services, but I entirely refused to answer the question one way or another, denying the right of any party in a church to make the acceptance of miracles a crucial question. I have always set my face against the attempt to extract a confession of faith from ministers. Such a confession to me would be a burden and a fetter. To-day miracle is not only an open question, but is for most of our men and churches settled in the negative. Nowhere is it now a test question."

"Does not our opposition to the doctrine of the Trinity take a less prominent place than of old?"

"Certainly. So far as doctrinal controversy is concerned our centre of gravity has shifted. The stress of our opposition to orthodoxy is no longer on speculative questions, but on ethical grounds. It is a revolt of the conscience against immoral doctrines, such as substitutionary atonement, everlasting hell, total depravity, much more than disagreement on subtle points of purely intellectual disputes like the Trinity. Our quarrel with orthodoxy is far less an intellectual bout of arms, and far more a moral and spiritual uprising. In this respect our name, 'Unitarian,' is unfortunately somewhat misleading. It described our position fifty years ago much more truly than it does now. As a matter of fact, our churches stand for something much wider than the unity of God as against the Trinity. They stand for perfect freedom of thought and expression on the greatest subjects; they stand for the humanitarian aspects of religion against the supernatural; they stand for nobler ethics—for a greater thought of God and a wider hope for men—and if the name 'Unitarian' is to be

kept it must be taken for what it 'connotes,' as the metaphysicians say, rather than for what it 'denotes.' But, as I have indicated, the great, radical, all-important change has been the dethroning of theology from a first to a second place. Religion above theology is now our motto. One sign of this is in the fact that not a single church with a doctrinal trust has been founded by our people in modern times. Immediately after Priestley's time doctrinal trusts were occasionally drawn up. A larger faith in the power of truth to take care of itself has led to the abandonment of such devices for propping up our views. With this, preaching has a far wider and broader range. It is no longer the mere exposition of a text or the proving of something from the Bible. It deals with the religious aspects of literature, science, and art. It discusses grave social problems. It is concerned far more largely with things outside theology."

"What of the fact that our churches have not grown in Birmingham?"

"That is only true with respect to the number of our churches. Those that exist have grown —they have grown in beneficent activities. Great have been the efforts, the work, the gifts of our people for the uplifting of the poor, the enlightenment of the dark, the comforting of the sorrowful; but, since the best part of all this has been done in quiet, unknown ways—because we have sounded no trumpet before us, people think we have been stagnant. Our Birmingham churches have not, it is true, increased in number, but they have enormously increased in usefulness. They have done great things for the civilization of Birmingham, and have been one of the most potent factors in bringing the blessings of knowledge, of purer tastes, of domestic happiness, within the reach of the masses."

As he spoke the Doctor's face kindled with a great light, and we remembered how mightily he himself had laboured in this town, for more than 20 years, to bring the civilizing power of a good education home to every man's door.

"There are two sides of dying,—the earth side and the heaven side."—*Savage.*

The Attainment of the Ends of Life.

A SERMON BY THE REV. STOPFORD BROOKE, M.A.

"*I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth.*

"*My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.*"—PSALM XXXIV., 1-2.

As long as man is on the earth, the end at which his life should aim is twofold—one outward, the welfare of others; another inward, his own goodness.

The first is easily defined, or seems to be so. It is easy to settle generally what we should do to make others happy, but the general definition of what each particular person should do, varies with the characters of those who make the effort. Each person must do this work for the welfare of others in a distinct way. But in general, it is the watchful support of others towards their well doing, their good desiring, their power of loving good; help by concurrent work with them, or by resistance to their ill; by giving and refusing, by sternness and by yielding, by praise and blame, by silence and by speech, by giving pain or giving pleasure.

But, however defined, the power of increasing the welfare of others is only learnt by practice and by encouragement of the pleasure and of the feelings which guide and inspire its acts. In truth, there is a mutual excitement of the feelings such as love pity and the rest and of the action itself which flows from them by which both the acts and the feelings grow. Every loving act deepens the passion of love and its power; and the deepened love in turn creates and inspires greater acts; so that progre s, at each movement, has a wider swing.

And we are so placed on this earth that everything leads us to help one another, and urges it. Dwellers on the same surface voyagers at the same moment, companions of the same path, we are incessantly asked for help, or impelled to help. It is a duty

which grows out of life, and when our pilgrimage is over, and we arrive at the house where we are to rest, the first thing we shall be asked is to render an account of what we have done for the welfare of our fellow-travellers. And He who will ask it is God, who made us pilgrims that we might learn love, and the life that is in love; who Himself is our home, and in whom one and all find refuge. It is faith in that end which makes our help and sacrifice religious. For this indeed is religion, to love men as we love God, with all our heart and soul and mind and strength; and the belief that all are at one with God binds all the pilgrims together towards an immortal end. And if we arrive at our Father's home, and have done our loving work, our reward will be His smile, and the heart to love the sunlight of God's immortal Love—"In His presence will be fulness of joy, and at His right hand pleasures for evermore."

That loving heart, the heart on which He can smile, will be our happiness, and our happiness is our supreme destination. But though it be our destination, it is not that we should seek. If we are worthy of it, we shall reach and win it; but if we seek it as an end, we lose it. We get it only by giving it up as the object of our lives. That is no paradox; every one who has loved knows that it is true.

In our life with Nature, our destination is to have joy from our communion with her. But if we go to Nature to seek that joy in order to enhance our own self-thinking or self-feeling, we miss that joy. The selfish desire binds us to ourselves, and being occupied with our own thoughts, neither wood nor stream nor hill can enter into our heart. We must empty ourselves in order to receive beauty, we must give away ourselves in love and admiration. When we have done that, when we desire joy no longer for ourselves, but are wholly absorbed in the beauty which is beyond ourselves, then all the loveliness of the world flows in upon us. The joy we did not seek as an end is ours without our seeking.

So is it also with human life. We become happy by seeking as an end the happiness of others. And it is in this continual self surrender of what seems happiness that we learn how to be good, to possess that goodness which is the second end of our lives.

Goodness is not a gift, it is not an instinct; it is a habit. We learn to be true by being true, to be loving by doing what is loving, to conquer our own wild will in no other way in the world but by conquering it. Everything is learnt, even goodness, and experiment is the only road to learning.

It would seem, then, that goodness consisted in acts alone, and so many persons have thought. But it does not need to point to all the Pharisaism of all religions to disprove that opinion. Acts in themselves good may be calculated for the sake of worldly and even evil ends, and the goodness of the acts does not then secure the goodness of the actor. On the contrary, true things falsely done make the doer more false than false things falsely done. Goodness by calculation is an excellent vice.

Yet even that statement may be wrongly used. For there are those who say that they will not, for the sake of truth, do things which are good unless they really care to do them; "unless our motives are right, unless we are quite sure of loving what is right, it is better not to do right;" and they sink back quietly into doing wrong, having thus salved their conscience. To do right with a wrong motive is, they think, wrong; therefore they often argue—(and they persuade themselves that there is no fallacy in their reasoning)—"that if to do right is wrong, as we have just agreed, then to do wrong is right."

That is a vile argument, and they know it. For, as I said, goodness is learnt by acts. Even when we have not goodness, we should practise it, that is, we ought to force our will to work against evil inclination. In time, as we go on, the desire of goodness for itself will come. Habit will make it not a sacrifice of inclination, but an instinct, a taste, a pleasure. The inclination will accompany the will. There are things so beautiful, that when we do them, even against our own feelings, they seize on the will, and on the heart. We realise their beauty with surprise when we do them, and then their beauty makes it delightful to do them. All things that are good and true and loving have this attractive power in themselves, the moment they are clearly seen and keenly felt. Even in a worse case, when good

things are done without heart in them, as it were by violence, they sometimes win a victory. The worst case of all is where one does what is good for an evil end. Even in that case, it sometimes happens that the doing of good things so enchants the soul, that the man forgets the evil end for which he did them, and remains the servant of goodness. Goodness is a habit of the soul, and of the life, and it is learnt by doing it.

But in all that I have said, I have not yet said what the state of goodness is. The things I have said are said of the way to goodness and of the means we are to use in its pursuit

The state of true righteousness is first that state of the soul in which we love what we rightly do. That is, though the feeling and doing of righteousness is a habit, yet we have a delight and a joy in every feeling and act, such as we have when we feel and act for one whom we love with all our hearts. Goodness, then, is being righteous from the heart; it is the joy of the soul; the first and foremost joy to which all other joy is subordinated, without which no pleasure is pleasure. It is the sunlight of life in which all things are bright, the luminous background against which all acts stand forth in their true colours, the air in which all things worth living live and move.

This joy, this fulness of the heart in doing what is good was that on which Christ dwelt the most as the mark of a child of God. Out of the abundance of the affections for goodness flowed the only goodness worth the smile of God. Nay, to be perfectly good needed a certain passion for goodness. "My meat and drink is to do my Father's will." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." If a man is to win that pearl of great price, he must sell all that he has.

It is only that profound, intense direction of all the powers of humanity towards righteousness, and realized joy in this passionate direction of the heart, which can, in its steady mastery, subdue all the passions to itself, temper all other joys into harmony with purity and peace, and drive out all unclean beasts from the temple of the soul. Goodness is then the knowledge of right and the doing of it, for the love of it, and with delight in it.

Secondly, this delight should grow until the life of goodness becomes ideal. Goodness is always practical, but it does not reach its height until it has added the ideal to the practical.

In proportion as truth is loved and done, in proportion as purity is loved and becomes the root of daily life, they and all other virtues grow into a wonderful beauty. We realise an ideal of them in the soul. And this ideal enthralls us with its loveliness, and stands forth before our mind, as if it were a living person of excelling charm whom we cannot but love with all our heart. We see the virtues in their valley, and at certain times, when the things of sense are less powerful, go down and dwell among them, lost in the delight of their contemplation. And in this contemplation there is a different joy from that of the practice of them; a joy which does not belong to anything we do, or to anything which goes back to ourselves—a solitary joy, a silent pleasure in which we lose ourselves, but which idealizes life, is the poetry of goodness, acts on us by a lofty and inspiring impulse, creates in us passionate desire and give us the power of fulfilling it. Without it any virtue is good, but it remains earthly. With it any virtue is good, but it enters also into Heaven. It was so far that Plato went, and all the noble crew that followed him.

Thirdly, the Jew went further than the Greek, for he took all these ideals and embodied them in God. Virtues, all goodness, was made personal in One who was their source and end, who was their giver and their reward. And He could be adored, reverenced, loved, so that now the love and the delight which went with goodness, were given and felt, not for impalpable ideals which could not give back our love, or share our delight, but for a Being who came to dwell in our hearts, and to be our friend. All the personal feelings of the deeper life were now drawn out in the practice of goodness. Moreover, we, as persons, were linked to a person, and, therefore, righteousness in us was freed from the possibility of becoming self-righteousness, because it led us at once to the Father of Righteousness. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy Name give the praise." That was now the cry of the soul; and in it goodness gained that humility which

guarded it from its greatest danger, the danger of self-glorying.

A fourth step was made when the character of God was more fully disclosed in Christ. We needed that our love of goodness should become closer, dearer, more human; that we should realize the righteousness of God as displayed in humanity; that we should be able to feel God in His Holiness through one of ourselves. It is that which Christianity has done. It has made goodness easier, in that it has made us understand what it is in our nature, and led us to love it through our own nature. And the love we have now to God has more of the intensity of the heart in it, more naturalness, more noble sentiment, yet not less of solemn reverence, since Jesus has shown us in a human life the beauty and the power of Holiness. To all the deep realities of goodness of which I have spoken, to the inward joy and love of righteousness, to the ideal contemplation of it, to the vision of all goodness centred in an Infinite Father, there is now added that noble and beautiful love, which, independent of all selfish passion, we feel for a man, for one of ourselves who has won the last height of righteousness through suffering and sacrifice.

When we have all these powers of goodness within, and give them their effects in a life, then we possess goodness; then we are righteous. And a beautiful thing it is to have, and makes a beautiful life. Righteousness is the good health of the soul. That which good health does for the body, goodness does for the inward life. It makes all within in harmony. There is neither jar, nor pain, nor darkness, nor weakness. And when, through the pervading of the whole being by righteousness, there is this harmony within, which subordinates through its rule all passions and powers; and by which we feel that we are at one with infinite order and law—then all outward things share in the peace and pleasure that result from being at one with the eternal beauty of right. That is the reward, not given from without, but following on a good, loving, pure, and truthful life as the fruit follows from the blossom. I do not say that there is not plenty of suffering in such a life; indeed, men who have won this harmony, often suffer more than those who are less good; but they have, even in suffering, that which sin and its pleasures have not—quiet delight in the daily duties of life, unworldly pleasure in work rising into an ideal pleasure when suffering is removed or common circumstances are happily arranged—real joy in seeing goodness and discovering it, such as Christ had—and always, if they have the sense of enjoyment of beauty, an everflowing stream of intimate and homely pleasure in Nature. There is nothing stormy in these pleasures, nothing which devastates the soul; but they are abiding, and finally build themselves into a temple of the soul.

Again, the pleasures of goodness partly rise from another quality of this state of righteousness and love. That quality is freedom. When we obey good, we are like citizens who love the laws of their country because they develop the true life of the country. Therefore, though we are subject to good, we are free in our subjection. We are only limited at those points where, if we went astray, we should lose force, and life, and peace, and growth. We are under a law, it is true, but we love the law; and we know we have a right to love it for in obeying it we grow in nobility and in life. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Freedom! Yes, we are liberated by obedience to the Highest from the slavery of evil desires, of wild passions, of an unguided will. These things are tyrants, and act as tyrants within. They devastate the villages of the soul; they ravage its peace; they destroy its growth; they corrupt its life; they arrogate all its powers round themselves alone, till no other work is left to be done but the work of satisfying them; and at the end their wages is death. Sometimes we are pleased with that tyranny, but in the end it wearies. It is then that the true Master of the soul enters, and the tyrants are driven forth. Afterwards, though we suffer for long, as a war-desolated country suffers, yet there is the unspeakable pleasure of liberty. Our life has now learnt its true end, and loves it, but the end brings with it its limits. And though it seems as if limitations spoil pleasure, it is not so.

Whoever lives without an end, and, as it were, by adventure, lives sadly. In the moral life, in order to have pleasure, we must have an end, and keep close to it; and everything which is end is also limitation. Not only is there

no goodness where there is no rule, but there is not even pleasure. Even the games of children have laws, and could not exist without them. These rules are at first a little wearisome, but in the end the more strictly the children observe them, the more the children amuse themselves. It is just the same in human life. Pleasure comes then through freedom, but freedom through obedience to laws we love, first, because they are good in themselves; and, secondly, because they are life-giving in relation to ourselves.

Lastly, goodness being in itself eternal and infinite, has even in its smallest parts the quality of the whole. There is no little touch of truth, or love, or purity, no little conquest for their sake over their contraries, which does not at once bring us into the eternal world, which does not open to us the infinite, which does not place us in relation to all the other forms of goodness, and to Him who is all goodness in Himself. Then in our life, "least things have the sense of greatest;" there is nothing common, nothing which is small, nothing which wholly belongs to the earth, nothing prosaic.

The really ideal life then, that is, the life which, even in its commonest and most usual work, is always opening out into infinite thought, feeling, beauty, and growth, is the life of all those qualities which, together in God, make up goodness. Indeed, the theatre on which we live is vast; and its vastness makes all that is done in it great. There is no little act of love, no effort in a child's heart towards truth, no unnoticed sacrifice in our own hearts, which does not become, in its ministration to the whole, magnificent. We live in a world whose glory is greater than we know. We think and feel and act, and our thoughts, feelings and actions seem worthless. But in the great whole, in God, part of whose vast work they are, our isolated acts of goodness have the quality of the whole of goodness. Our feelings are part of the infinite love which keeps and knits the universe together. Our thoughts are in the infinite thought of God, and made of use in Him; and all our acts, and thoughts, and feelings on earth are the beginning of feelings, thoughts, and acts which shall be finished elsewhere when we are wholly at one with their source, when we are, to use St. Paul's astonishing and exultant phrase, filled with all the fulness of God.

"The People."

Amongst the petty arts of the smart writer is a sarcastic use of inverted commas. Thus, every petty journalist—and indeed some great ones who ought to know better—whenever there is any occasion to refer to the distinguished chief of the Salvation Army always writes him down as "General" Booth. As if he had not just as good a right to the title as any chief of the Jesuits! So in an account of a democratic meeting done by the funny man on the staff of any paper, "written by gentlemen for gentlemen," you shall find "the People" adorned in a similar manner. Thus, we are told how Mr. Boanerges Smith demanded the abolition of the House of Lords in the name of "the People," and how Mr. Stentor Jones declared that the time had come for the overthrow of all sovereignty, but that of what he called "the People." Well, I am far from denying that most orators, whether on the stump or in Parliament, occasionally flounder into cant. But even cant about "the People" is only the seamy side of a great faith, in which I see the resurrection of a buried religion, — Christ's religion of humanity. Now I confess I like Christ's religion of humanity better than Comte's, or even Mr. Frederic Harrison's.

The other day a clerical member of the School Board for London went into an infant school during the time of religious instruction. He heard the question asked "What was the name of the father of Jesus?" And to his horror the innocent babes answered, "Joseph!"* His feelings were still further aggravated when he found that the teacher allowed the answer to pass without rebuke. It is possible she had been reading with her class the gospel story of how the child Jesus strayed into the Temple, and they may have had in their minds his mother's words: "Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." But the clerical visitor would doubtless have rebuked Mary herself had he heard the words from her lips. He was so angry that he raised a stormy discussion on the

*A visitor more instinct with educational philosophy would have been inclined to criticise the form rather than the substance of the answer. These jerky school responses by a single word beget laziness and awkwardness in speech. German school children would be expected to reply in a complete sentence: "The name of the father of Jesus was Joseph," —or at least, "His name was Joseph."

School Board, and unless the friends of unsectarian teaching are on the alert it seems not impossible that the incident may cause an attempt to introduce the so called Apostles' Creed into the schools. In the course of the discussion a member of the Board proposed to issue an order that the children "are to be distinctly taught that Christ is God, with such explanations of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity as may be suited to their capacities." If such explanations adapted to the infant mind can be produced, the discussion will indeed have been fruitful

But really, apart from all theological theories, this is not the aspect of Christ's nature which most needs to be impressed on our school children. Those who have experience of their ways know that to them the sacred names of God and Christ are simply interchangeable. I have myself been told by some of them how "God talked to a woman of Samaria," and how "God met the widow of Nain" in her trouble The most zealous devotees of the Athanasian Creed need not have any anxiety on this score But "the Man Christ Jesus" does not appear very distinctly in our schools, and it is no idle paradox to say that he never will, until the instruction is made exclusively secular. For the bickerings and wranglings occasioned by theological fidgetiness keep teachers in a perpetual fever of orthodoxy. The lady, for instance, who innocently occasioned this recrudescence of Trinitarian zeal on the London School Board will be very careful for the future how she makes the Saviour s humanity too prominent. Themore shadowy and mysterious she can make him the better will she please her clerical masters whom London ratepayers put over her, and are certain to elect again. The loss to spiritual culture thus occasioned is incalculable. If, for one year, school teachers were allowed to confine themselves to the gospel of the Man Christ Jesus as a secular reformer, they would effect more spiritual culture than in seven years of theological cram.

Not in our schools only but in our churches as well there is need to recur to Christ's religion of humanity. If there are times when democratic cant makes me almost feel like the "gentlemen who write for gentlemen" I have only to turn to the gospels, and "the People," even in inverted commas, become sacred to me once more. I note how Jesus was always deeply moved by the sight of a multitude. See him as he comes out of the solitude of the hills, where he had sought "repose amongst eternal things," and as at a bend in the valley he finds the villagers for miles round awaiting him. "And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things." The pathos of the words is deepened in a parallel passage, where we are told that "When he saw the multitude he was moved with compassion on them, because they were wearied and scattered* as sheep having no shepherd" Can we not imagine it? They were poor folk, all of them. Their daily lives were very dull and squalid. But the divine spark in them had been quickened by the inspiring words and mighty personal charm of one who shewed them the glory of God in flowers, and children, and love. The strange keen joy that possessed them in hearing him made them always long for its renewal; and now they had come afoot from all the villages round, because they heard he was amongst their hills. Half-fed and destitute, as many of them were, they threw themselves on the grass, in utter weariness, to await the prophet. There were worn-out labourers, and tired women with fretful sickly children in their arms, and diseased sufferers who found their pains assuaged, they knew not how, in his presence. At a bend in the descent from his mountain solitude. the whole multitude came into view, and his heart went forth to them, and their sorrows fell upon him, and "he was moved with compassion on them." But how instinct this compassion was with reverence is shown by what he did. "He began to teach them many things." His faith in their capacity for ennoblement by truth and love shewed his estimate of "the People."

There is another passage concerning Jesus and the people which does not appear to me to be appreciated as it ought to be. In Matthew xi. it seems to be plainly suggested that the Lord was disappointed and even disconcerted by the message brought from John the Baptist. The question, "Art thou he that should come,

*Matthew ix., 36. See marginal reading and revised version.

or do we look for another?" shewed that John was either insufficiently informed, or strangely inappreciative. Jesus told the messengers to report to their master what they saw, and he significantly added, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." It is noteworthy that in the list of wonders to be recounted to John the crowning place is given to the fact that "the poor are hearing glad tidings." Then, when the messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak of the imprisoned prophet and his mission. The hesitation shewn in a moment of depression did not justify anyone in regarding him as "a reed shaken by the wind." He was a prophet, and more than a prophet. For he not only predicted the glory of the latter day, but by his solitary revolt against dead formalism he had, as it were, broken down the barriers that kept men out of the kingdom of heaven, so that all the bolder spirits, the ardent Peters, the "sons of thunder," and many another wild Galilean, were pressing and crowding into it. But, great as he was, John himself had not quite entered the kingdom. The lowliest soul that surrendered to the new reign of love was greater than John, who looked for a revolutionary power. But, alas! John was not alone in his failure to understand the true mission of the Christ. The priests, the rulers of the synagogues, the Puritan Pharisees, and intellectual Sadducees, treated with contemptuous indifference the new gospel. And, under their leading, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, with all their little dignities and social authorities, were impermeable to the inspiration that should have exalted them to heaven. Then it seems as if the eye of Jesus caught again the upturned faces and eager attention of the ragged, hungry crowd about him. Instantly the cloud was lifted from his spirit. "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth," he cried, "that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." It is as though he were recognising in the grateful love of "the people" an ample compensation for the hesitation or indifference of all "men of light and leading." John's doubts were disappointing, and the stolidity of all the old organs of society was depressing. Well, let them go, he seems to say; but do not you forsake me, you sufferers, you toilers; you, the dim and noteless many, on whom the stress of society's burdens at last descends. "Come unto me, all that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

This is Christ's attitude toward "the people." This is Christ's religion of humanity. In memory of this even the bathos of the poor demagogue, who rants about "the people," may have, to our minds, a certain suggestion of the true millennium. For only now, after nigh two thousand years, are the immortal seeds sown by Jesus beginning to bring forth their harvest. Social reformers, social democrats, collectivists, and the like, are all in their way groping toward Christ's ideal of society. They may be dazzled by the "broken lights" of him, which are all we see through the break up of cloudy traditions and creeds. They may seem, as certain early Christians did, to be "drunk with new wine," as indeed in a moral sense they are. But, in their desire, so far as possible, to equalise the many with the few, and by their faith in the possibility of redemption for the people from ignorance, drink, sweaters and monopolists, they are closer followers of Christ than any mitred prelate.

J. ALLANSON PICTON.

Her Faith.

How quietly the cold hands keep,
Pressed to the gracious heart that loved their grace,
Poppies unconscious of their resting-place,
Emblems of dreamless sleep.

Around her the star-systems roll
Through wastes of silence. Yet the enfolding Power,
That fashioned with such care a senseless flower,
Will not forsake a soul.

ALFRED HAYES.

"The wealth of any country is the portion of its possessions which feeds and educates good men and women. The strength and power of a country depend on the quantity of good men and women in it."—*Ruskin.*

IT is not so much in *buying* pictures as in *being* pictures you can encourage a noble school of art.—*Ruskin.*

Notes of Sunday School Lessons.

FROM TENNYSON'S LAST VOLUME.

SUNDAY, MARCH 5TH.

ST. TELEMACHUS, OR THE MARTYR OF HUMANITY.

The poem should be read at the close of the lesson.

(Texts on the crime of cruelty: Exodus xx., 13; Psalm lxxiv, 10; Proverbs xii., 10; Lamentations iv., 3-4; Titus iii., 3; also, the parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke x., 25-37.)

Describe the old gladiatorial combats of Rome—the lust for blood—the delight in brutal sports—Christians thrown to the lions—men skinned alive in the Colosseum.—On special occasions as many as 300 pairs of gladiators fought in the arena in one day. 100 pairs was the fashionable number for private entertainments. Trojan celebrated his triumph over Decebalus by a show of 5000 pairs of human butchers. In every considerable town of the Roman Empire, from Britain to Syria, an amphitheatre was to be found for this brutal and degrading amusement. Yet, when we shudder at this horrible tale, we must remember it is only 50 years since bear-baiting was prohibited in England, and only 26 years since slavery with all its horrors, its Legrees, bloodhounds, whips, etc., was put down in the United States.

Telemachus, an Egyptian hermit, living in the desert, suddenly journeyed to Rome, and arriving on the day of a gladiatorial show, was hurried with the crowd into the Colosseum. Horrified at the spectacle, he ran down the stairs, leapt over the barriers, and rushed between the combatants, forbidding them, in the name of Jesus, to take each other's lives. The spectators of the murderous fray, possessed with the drunken glee of the demon who delights in such bloodshed, stoned to death the preacher of peace. The revolt of feeling caused by this event was so great that the Emperor put a stop to these butcheries, and decreed

"That Rome no more should wallow in this old lust
Of Paganism, and make her festal hour
Dark with the blood of man who murder'd man."

SUNDAY, MARCH 12TH.

AKBAR'S DREAM, OR RELIGIOUS TOLERATION.

(Read: Numbers xi., 24-30; Luke ix., 49-56 1 Corinthians x, 27.)

Almost every great religion of the world has made the mistake of thinking itself to be the only true and God-given religion for men. Men have failed to recognise the work and presence of God anywhere else but in their own prophets. They have persecuted all who would not accept their creeds and practices. Jesus taught the great lesson of toleration. The Bible, in many places, admits the inspiration of prophets of other races besides the Jews (see Acts x., 34-5). Remark on the persecutions of Catholics by Protestants, and of Protestants by Catholics, of Dissenters by Churchmen, of Stundists in Russia, &c. Then tell the story of Akbar's dream. Akbar, a great Mogul emperor, of enlightened mind, ruled over 15 large provinces in India, inhabited by races of different creeds and worship. Himself a follower of Mahomet, he was urged by his counsellors to compel all his subjects to adopt that faith, and to persecute and put to death those who refused. But, his bosom friend and chosen guide, one Abul Fazl, persuaded him to the wiser course of toleration, "to hunt the tiger of oppression out of office," and "alchemise old hates into the gold of love," and "beat back the menacing poison of intolerant priests." Akbar dreamt one night that he had built a great fane, which was neither temple, pagoda, mosque, nor church, but a place where all might worship who loved Truth, and Peace, and Justice Then he dreamt that he died, and that his son after him pulled the sacred fane to pieces, and brought back the old sad times of religious bigotry and persecution. Yet, while he grieved to see the ruin of his handiwork, another race arose who fitted stone to stone again that sacred place, and Truth and Peace and Love and Justice came and dwelt therein, and men learned to serve that Infinite,

"Within us, as without, that All-in-all,
And over all, the never-changing One
And ever-changing Many, in praise of Whom
The Christian bell, the cry from off the Mosque,
And vaguer voices of Polytheism,
Make but one music, harmonising 'Pray.

SUNDAY, MARCH 19TH.

KAPIOLANI, OR THE DOWNFALL OF SUPERSTITION.

(Texts: 1 Samuel iv., 3-11; 2 Kings xviii., 4; Mark vii,, 1-8)

Superstition manifests itself in different ways —from the African savage who makes a monkey his god, to so-called civilized people who will not sit down to dinner if thirteen are at the table. The essence of superstition is having a low view of God and Providence, when it is possible to have a higher. It believes in chance or luck, instead of cause and effect; it sets store by *things*—sacred places, customs, days, instead of life and conduct; it thinks there is something capricious in the action of God; or that there is real religion in fasting, or washing the hands, or turning to the east, or bowing to the name of Jesus, or using the sign of the cross. To make an idol of the Bible, or the church, to set them above reason, is superstition. It is superstition to think that salvation and acceptance with God depends on holding a certain creed, or that there is any merit in having certain theological opinions. Merit is in motive, in effort, in conduct, in character.

All races have risen above superstition by defying the particular custom, thing, or idol which people held sacred. So Kapiolani, a great chieftainess, who lived in Hawii at the beginning of this century, broke down the terrible superstitious dread of her people, and won them to Christianity by openly defying the priests of the local goddess. This goddess was a spirit of evil, who lived in a great lake of fire—volcanic—up in the mountains, and no woman might come near her abode. Certain red berries were sacred to her, and a woman was forbidden to touch them or, it was believed, she would die. The queen gathered these berries, climbed the mountain, and threw them into the fiery lake—into the face of the supposed goddess, and returned unhurt.

Blest be the voice of the teacher who calls to us
Set yourselves free.
Noble the Saxon who hurl'd at his idol a valorous
weapon in olden England!
Great and greater, and greatest of women, island
heroine, Kapiolani
Clomb the mountain, and flung the berries, and
dared the goddess, and freed the people
Of Hawa-i-ee!

SUNDAY, MARCH 26TH.

THE CHURCHWARDEN AND THE CURATE, OR THE CRAWLING WAY OF THE COWARD AND WORLDLING

(Texts: 1 Kings xxii., 13-28; Acts iv., 18-21.)

Although this is a humorous poem it is by no means unsuited for a Sunday School class. It illustrates the gross superstition that prevailed only a generation ago in many country places. This Lincolnshire farmer actually believed that the Baptists, who used his pond for the rite of immersion, poisoned its water by the sins they left behind, resulting in the death of the cow drinking there. This, however, is incidental. The point of the poem is in the sneaking, crawling, cowardly prudence of the farmer, who has found it pay *not* to be frank and outspoken, and who advises the young curate, whom he has known from boyhood, and who is the son of the vicar of the parish, never to rebuke the sins of the rich and the great. He points out to him that the vicar, his father, had never obtained promotion, and never would, because of his plain speaking. The way for the young curate to prosper is to

"Cotton down to thy betters, and keeäp thysen to thysen,
But niver not speäk plaain out, if tha wants to git forrards a bit,
But creaäp along the hedge-bottoms, an' thou'll be a bishop yit."

He quotes the example of the actual bishop of the diocese:—

"They says' 'at he coom'd fra nowt—
Binn i' traäde. Sa I warrants 'e never said haafe wot 'e thowt,
But 'e creaäpt an' 'e crawl'd along, till 'e feeäld 'e could howd his oän,
Then 'e married a greät yerl's darter, an' sits o' the Bishop's throän.

Contrast this with the zealous courage of Micaiah and the boldness of Peter. Shew the need of courage in life. Courage is not rashness nor rudeness, it is the determination, at all costs, to be true in speech and in life; not to keep silence when wrong is adoing; not to be afraid of majorities. See Norman Macleod's hymn, "Courage brother, do not stumble," and Russell Lowell's poem with the fine lines,

"They are slaves who dare not be
In the right with two or three."

JOSEPH WOOD.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

The Primroses and the Bee.

A PARABLE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS.

By David Macrae.

Matthew v., 16.

A bunch of yellow primroses grew on a rough steep bank by the roadside, near the entrance to a rich man's gardens.

Very pretty they looked, and the air was always sweet with their fragrance. But they sometimes said to one another, "What a pity that we are not in the rich man's garden! Then it would be worth while trying to smell sweet and to look fair. But what is the use of trying, out here on this rough bank, beside the dusty road?"

One day a bee went humming along, and when it came to the bunch of primroses, it said, "Well, bonnie little primroses, how are you to-day?"

And the primroses said, "We are very well But we often wish we were in the rich man's garden there For then it would be worth while trying to smell sweet and look fair. But, what is the use, out here by the dusty wayside?"

And the bee said, "Ah, little primroses, don't say that! I am in the gardens every day, and I know that amongst all the beautiful flowers that are there, nobody would care for you. But here, by the wayside, everyone that passes can get a sight of you, and can scent your sweet fragrance—people that never get into the rich man's gardens at all. And the poor dusty wayfarer, weary with travel, when he stops here to rest himself upon this bank, oh, how it delights him to see you! And when he scents your sweet perfume it puts him in mind of the days, long, long ago, when he was a happy child, and went romping away with his merry companions to gather wild flowers in the sunny woods. And so, when he rises, he goes on his way refreshed. O, dear little primroses, don't think it isn't worth while to do your best where you are."

When the bee was gone, the primroses thought for a while, and then they said cheerfully to one another, "What the bee says is right. God knows what is best, and he has put us here to give joy to many who would never be near us if we were shut up in the rich man's garden."

And so they did their best, and looked as bright and smelt as sweet to all the poor wayfarers who passed along the road, as they could have done before a king or a queen.

Stars.

How pretty is each little star,
Each tiny twinkler, soft and meek!
Yet many in this world there are
Who do not know that stars can speak.

To them the skies are meaningless,
A star is not a living thing;
They cannot hear the messages
Those shining creatures love to bring.

Hush! listen! ah! it will not do;
You do but listen with your ears;
And stars are understood by few,
For it must be the heart that hears.

Look up, not *only* with your eyes;
Ah! do you hear the tender sound?
To hearts familiar with the skies,
The stars are nearer than the ground.

A. B. S.

News from the Field.

SOME time ago an article appeared in one of our mining journals on "A New Method of Extracting Gold from Reluctant Ores." It is quite clear that the secret of this method is with Dr. Brooke Herford. He knows how to extract gold from reluctant pockets better than any man among us, and he is to be heartily congratulated on the success of his effort for doubling the income of the B. and F. It shows what a determined man may do who has confidence in himself and in his cause. The question now arises, what will the committee do with their new funds? We think there will be a feeling of disappointment that nobody has had courage or imagination enough to strike out a new and distinctive line of work to mark the access of fortune, but that the whole of the added income is to go in augmentation of existing movements. It is right they should be helped, but could not a good lump sum be devoted to founding a new cause in a new district every year? That would be something special and distinctive, and if the denomination as a whole resolved that one such new church should be started every year and opened free of debt, we should take a large step in church extension. Concentrate your efforts each year on one church, instead of frittering them over twenty, should be the order of the day.

THE ANNUAL MEETINGS OF THE MIDLAND CHRISTIAN UNION PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY, to be held on the 20th of this month, are exciting considerable attention. A new departure is taken in holding a meeting in the Town Hall, Birmingham. The Committee of the Assembly thought that the time had come when a large public meeting might help to stimulate the churches in the district and at the same time show outsiders that the principles for which we stand are living and active. It is most important that the churches should exert themselves to make the meeting a success. No such meeting has been held since the Triennial Conference met in Birmingham, eight years ago, and it will be simply disastrous if the churches allow the meeting to fail through apathy arising from any cause. It is to be hoped that members of our congregations will not only come themselves—be the weather what it may—but that they will bring friends with them. The speakers are all men worth listening to, and the proceedings will be varied with anthems sung by a choir of 200 voices from churches belonging to the assembly.

THE Annual Meeting and Soiree of the Church of the Messiah was held on February 15th. A large number of members were present and the business meeting was unusually interesting. Hearty congratulations were offered to Dr. Crosskey on his returning health. A warm welcome was given to the junior minister, Rev. J. Crossley; and the report of the Vestry Committee was encouraging with respect to the condition of the church and its institutions, and hopeful for the future. After the anxious time through which the congregation has been passing, it was felt that brighter days were in store.

OUR friends at the Lye held a most successful Annual Meeting on January 30th. The report showed that more money had been raised than in any previous year. The need of class-rooms was strongly urged. Addresses were given by Mr. J. Pardoe and the Rev. J. Wrigley, A. W. Timmis, A. E. O'Connor, and F. Wood, of Portsmouth. The Lye church has solved the problem, for itself at any rate, how to get working men to public worship. There is always a large attendance of "The toilers and moilers."

THE Kidderminister church announces a new departure. A visiting Committee, 20 strong, has been formed, and 300 houses are now under constant visitation. An attempt is also being made to get a complete register of occasional attendants that they may be looked up. Free distribution of 200 copies of the *Seed Sower* will form part of the work of the visitors each month.

OLDBURY.—GUILD OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD.—The annual Festival was held on Monday, February 13th. An open Guild Meeting followed the tea, at which two new members were admitted. The warden, the Rev. Henry McKean, gave a cordial welcome to the Rev. E. P. Hall, Provost of the Union, and the Rev. E. D. Priestley Evans. The Provost referred to the difficulties now attending the organisation of the Guild branches, but expected that after a conference, to be held in London, the basis would be widened and a new encouragement and impetus derived therefrom. Mr. Evans expressed the opinion that systematic philanthropic work outside the congregation ought to result from Guild membership. This meeting was followed by the Communion Service in the Chapel. The Rev. E. D. P. Evans read prayers and lessons, the Rev. E. P. Hall preached, and the Rev. Henry McKean distributed the elements, and concluded the service. Thirty-five communicated.

"One thought I have, my ample creed,
So deep it is and broad,
And equal to my every need,—
It is the thought of God."

—*F. L. Hosmer.*

Midland Church Calendar for March.

BIRMINGHAM: Church of the Messiah, Broad Street.
Ministers: Revs. Dr. Crosskey, 117, Gough Road; and James Crossley, 5, Wyndham Road. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: Annual Meeting of Midland Christian Union, Monday, March 20th.
(*See Advt*)

BIRMINGHAM: The Hurst Street Mission.
Minister: Rev. W. J. Clarke, 19, Spring Road, Edgbaston.
Services: 10-15, 2-45, and 6-30.
Special: Various Mission Agencies nightly.

BIRMINGHAM: The Fazeley Street Mission.
Minister: Rev. T. Pipe, 59, Gt Brook Street. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: Congregational Tea Meeting, Monday, March 6th.
Chairman, H. L. Smith, Esq.

BIRMINGHAM: The Newhall Hill Church.
Minister: Rev. J. Charlesworth, Claremont Road. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: Exchange Sunday, March 19th. Collections for M. C. U.

BIRMINGHAM: The Old Meeting Church.
Minister: Rev. Joseph Wood, 120, Gough Road, Edgbaston. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: Midland Christian Union Sermons and Collections, March 19th.

BIRMINGHAM: The Church of the Saviour.
Minister: The Rev. J. C. Street, 19, Charlotte Road, Edgbaston.
Services: 11 and 6-30.

BANBURY: Christ Church, Horsefair.
Minister: Rev. H Hill. Service: Evening, 6-30.
Special: March 5th, Lecture, "The Consciousness of God in the Soul."
March 19th, Lecture, "Unitarianism" Social Evening, Wednesday, March 22nd.

COSELEY: The Old Meeting House.
Minister: Rev. Henry Eachus. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: Quarterly Collection, March 19th.

CRADLEY: Netherend Chapel.
Minister: Rev. A. E. O'Connor. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: Exchange Sunday, March 19th. Collections for M. C. U.

DUDLEY: The Old Meeting House.
Minister: Vacant. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: Rev. J. Wood will preach on Sunday, March 19th. Collections for M. C. U.

EVESHAM: Oak Street Meeting House.
Minister: Rev. M. S. Dunbar, M.A., 9, Albert Road. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: Exchange Sunday, March 19th.

Midland Church Calendar for March—*(Continued)*

KIDDERMINSTER:
Minister: Rev. E. D. Priestley Evans. Services: 10-45 and 6-30.
Special: Exchange Sunday, March 19th. Collections for M.C.U.

KINGSWOOD: Kingswood Chapel, Hollywood.
Minister: Rev. J. Hardinge Matthews. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: Sunday Evening Lectures in March on the Parables.

OLDBURY: Unitarian Meeting House.
Minister: Rev. Henry McKean, The Dingle, Oldbury. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: Exchange Sunday, March 19th. Collections for M. C. U.

SHREWSBURY: High Street Church.
Minister: Rev. E. Myers, F.G.S., Claremont Hill. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: Exchange Sunday, March 19th, Rev. George Eyre Evans.

STOURBRIDGE: Presbyterian Chapel.
Minister: Rev. A. W. Timmis. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: Exchange Sunday, March 19th. Collections for M.C.U.

TAMWORTH: Cole Hill Chapel.
Minister: Rev. J. Howard, 17, Aldersgate Street. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: Exchange Sunday, March 19th, Rev. E. D. P. Evans.

THE LYE: Unitarian Chapel.
Minister: Rev. J. Wrigley, B.A. Service: 6-30.
Special: March 19th, Exchange Sunday, Rev. J. Howard.

WALSALL: Unitarian Free Church.
Minister: Rev. Peter Dean, 3, Sandwell Street. Services: 11-15 and 6-30.
Special: March 19th, Exchange Sunday. Collections for M.C.U.

WEST BROMWICH: Lodge Road Chapel.
Minister: Rev. John Harrison, Jesson Street. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: March 19th, Exchange Sunday. Collections for M.C.U.

WHITCHURCH: Church of the Saviour, Highgate.
Minister: Rev. George Eyre Evans, 5, Mill Street.
Services: 11, 2-15 for Children, 6-30.
Special: Church open daily for private prayer and rest.
Exchange Sunday, March 19th, Rev. E. Myers, F.G.S.

WOLVERHAMPTON: Unity Church, Snow Hill.
Minister: Rev. L. G. Harris Crook, Oaklands Road. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: Exhibition of Work and Sale of Gifts on Tuesday, March 28th. Opened by Rev. J. Wood, at 3 p.m.